

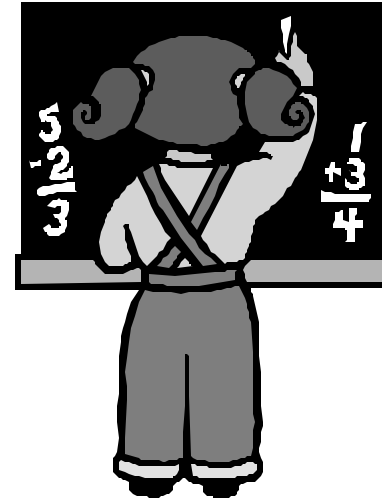
Transitioning Families From PreK to K-12

Presenters: Judy Levine and
Jacqueline Wood
Michigan Department of Education

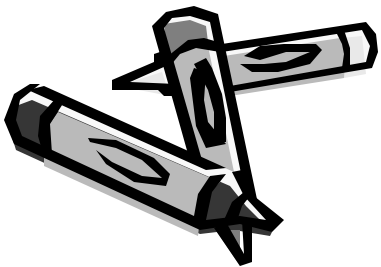


Take a few minutes as you come in and....

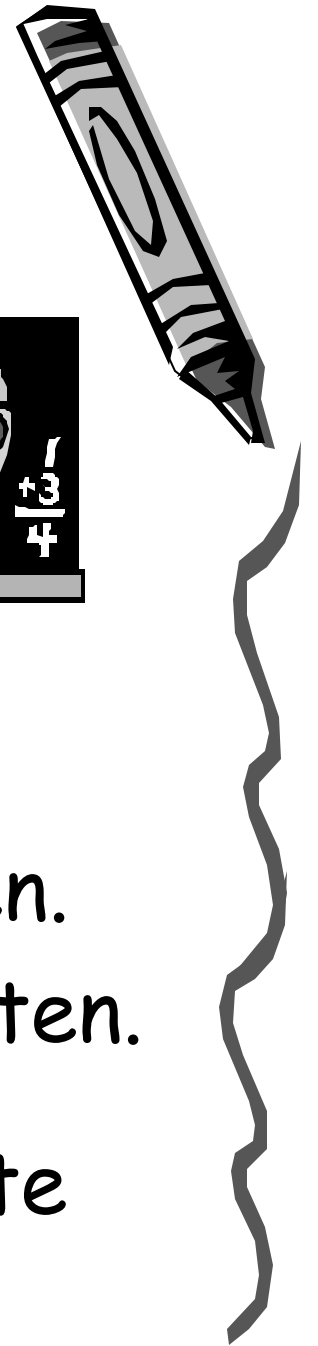
List all of the things you do
to help....



- children transition to kindergarten.
- families to transition to kindergarten.

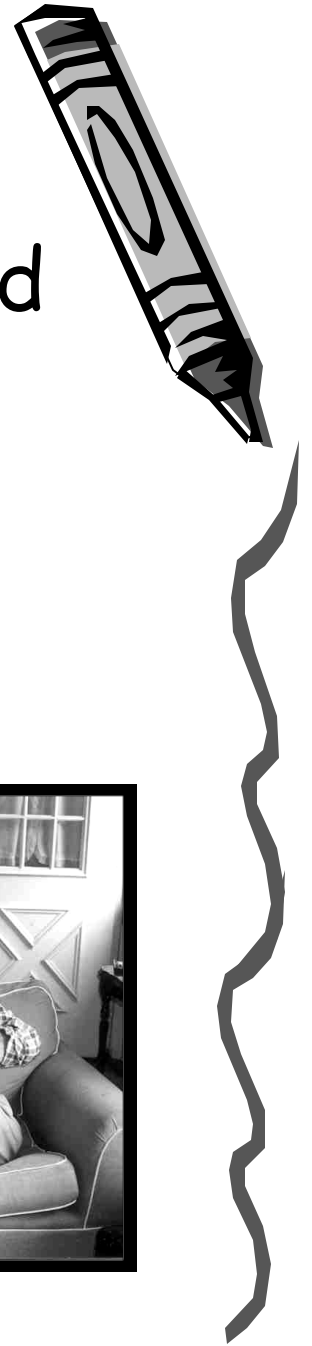


Place each idea on a separate
sticky note sheet.

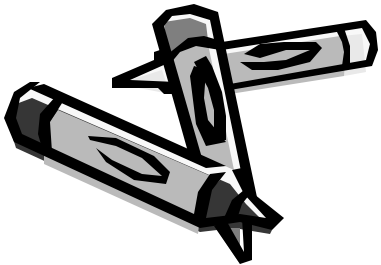




Pass all of the child related ideas to the end of your row.



Now pass all of the family related ideas to the end of your row.



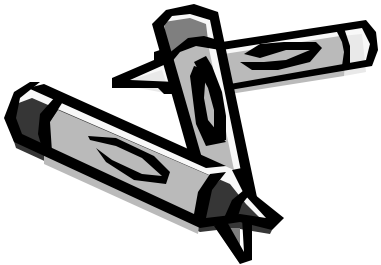
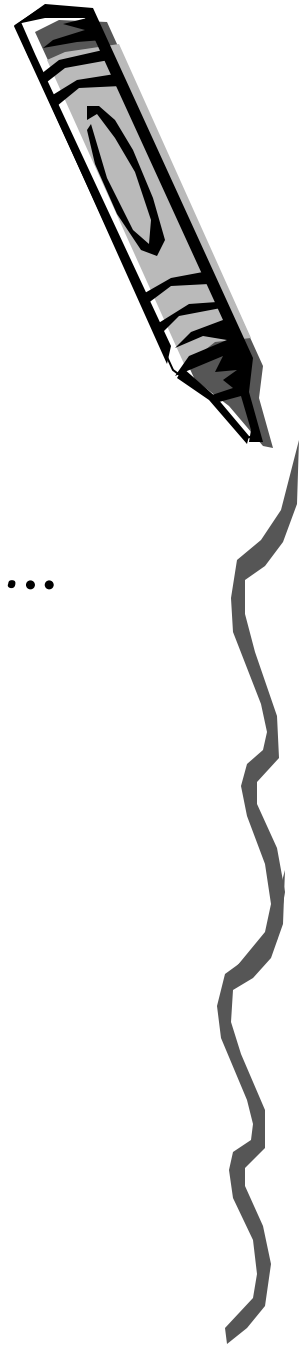
Tell Us About Yourself

Are you a parent of a child who went to kindergarten in the last five years?

Do you work with kindergarten children?....
first or second grade children?

Do you work with four-year-old
children?....younger children?

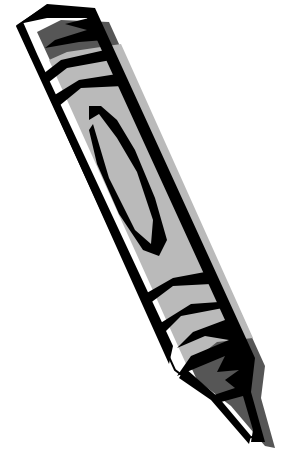
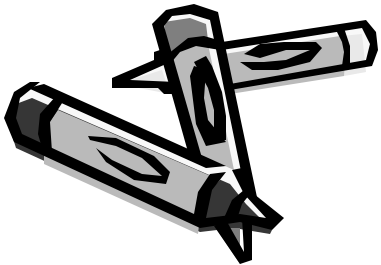
Do you work with parents primarily?



Transitioning To Kindergarten Is A Big Step

- It is the ending of the familiar -home and preschool- to the start of a more formalized structure of K-12 education.

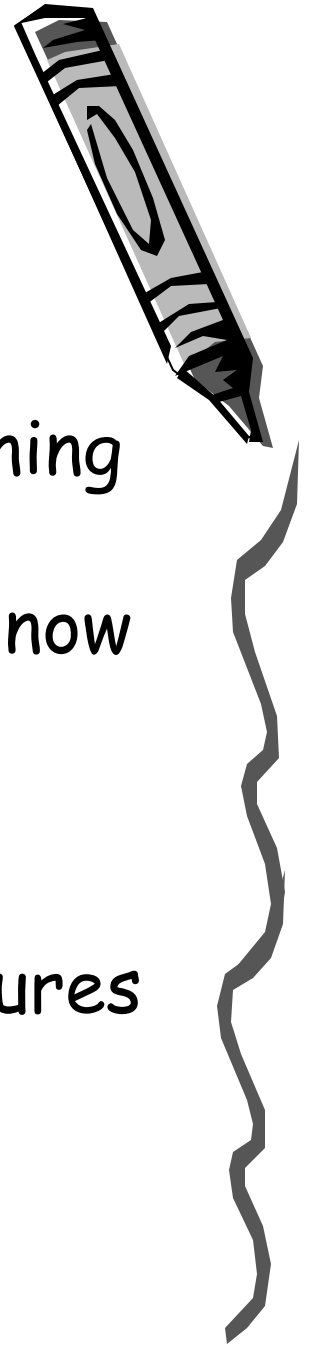
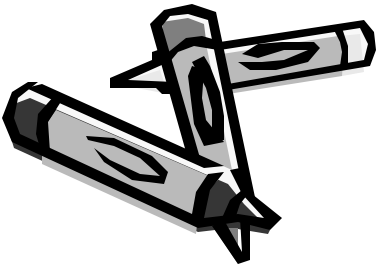
Note: Preschool for this morning's session means all early childhood programs.



It can be

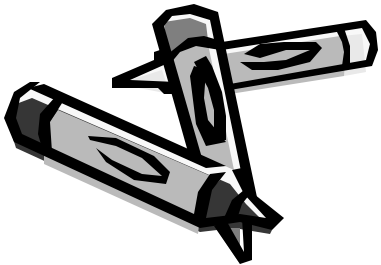
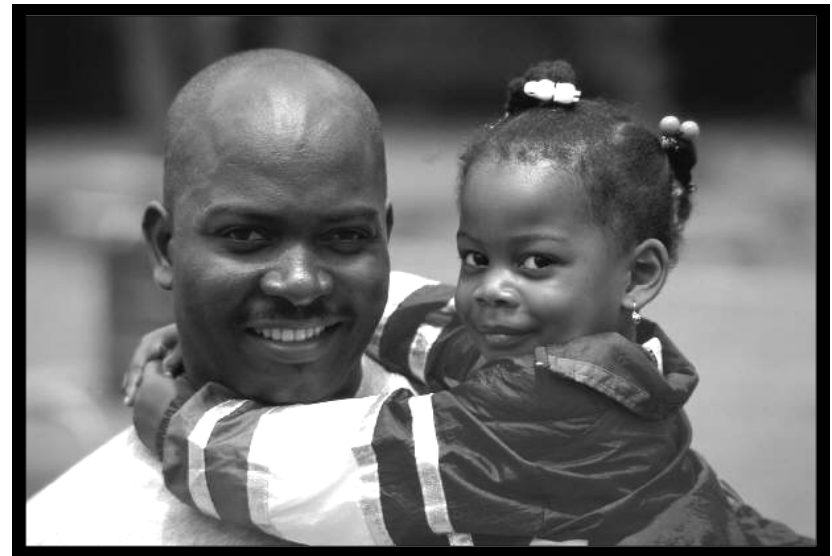
- an exhilarating change.
- a frightening experience and an awakening of old memories.
- a loss of early childhood as the child is now an elementary student.

An elementary school can be a place of unfamiliar language, culture and procedures for both the child and the family.

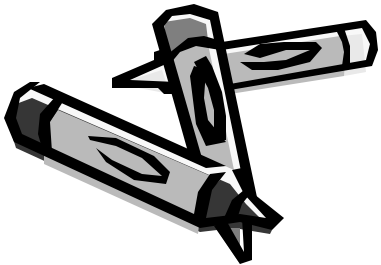
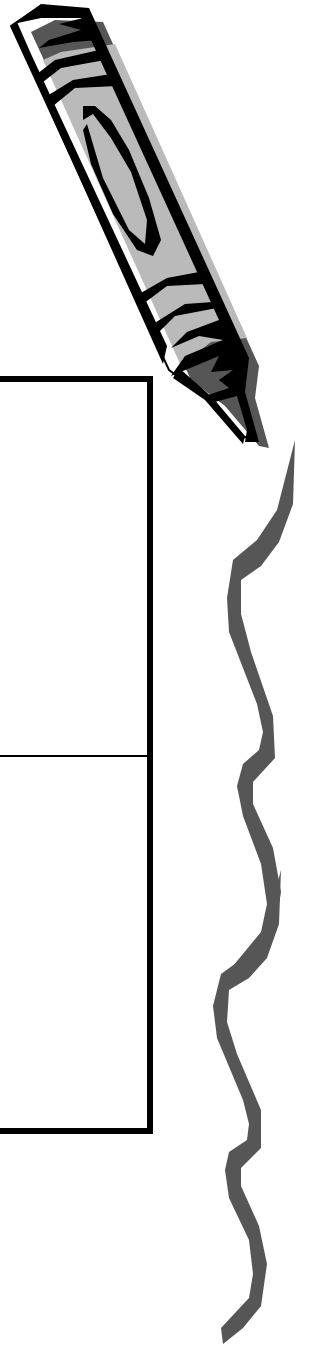


We need to focus on

transitioning
the family, as
well as the
child, long
before the first
kindergarten
bell rings.



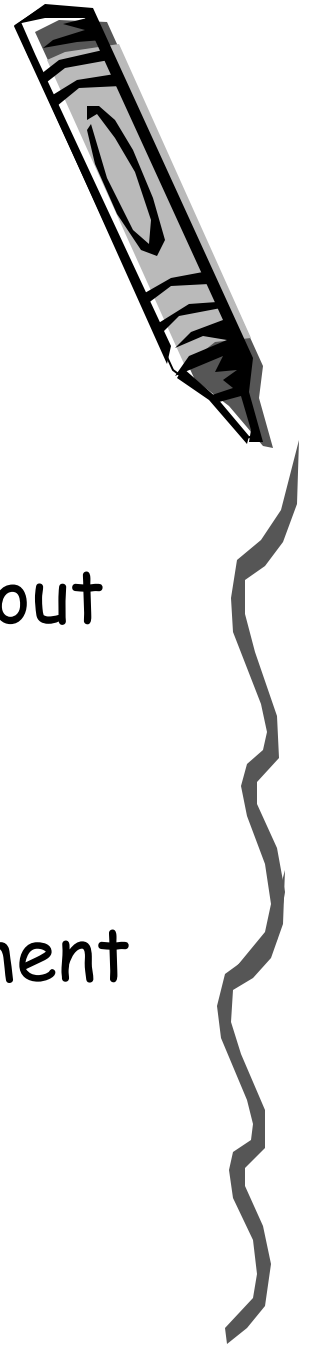
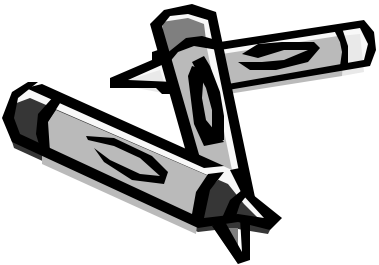
Why should we help families transition?



Kindergarten Transition

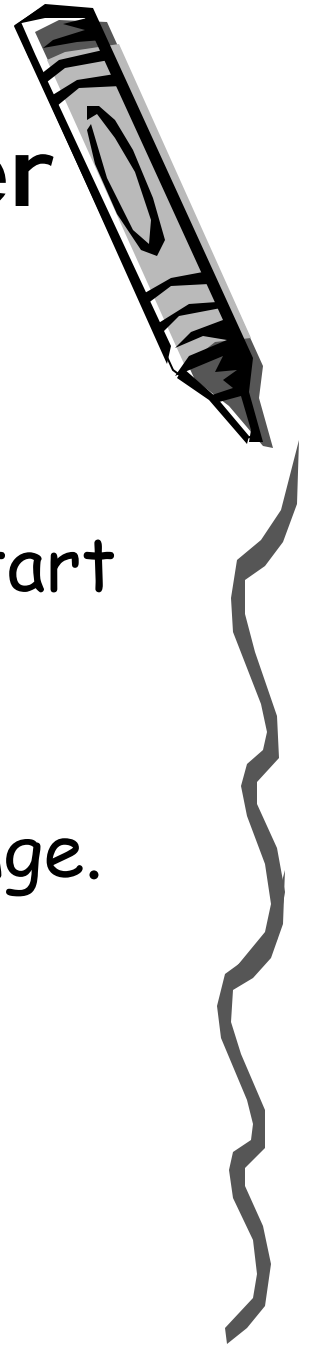
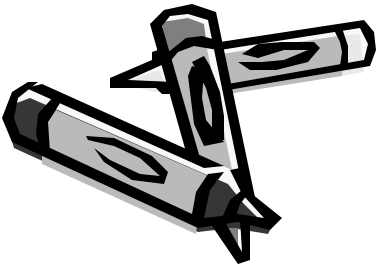


Parents' feelings about transitioning and kindergarten can help or hinder children's adjustment to kindergarten.



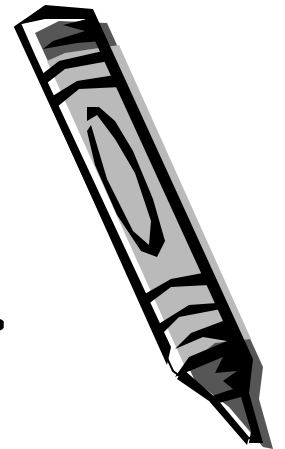
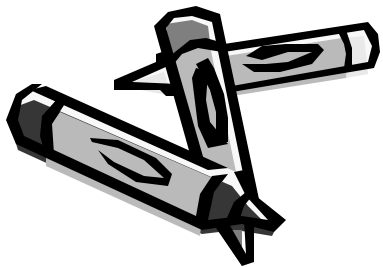
We know children adjust better to kindergarten when ...

- the transition begins well before the start of kindergarten -- not just prior to kindergarten entry.
- parents feel comfortable with the change.
- schools and preschool programs work together to reach preschool parents.



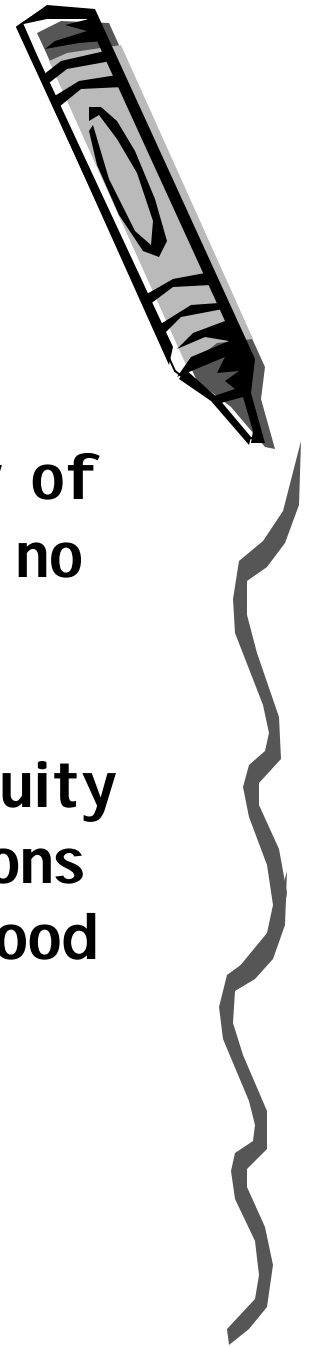
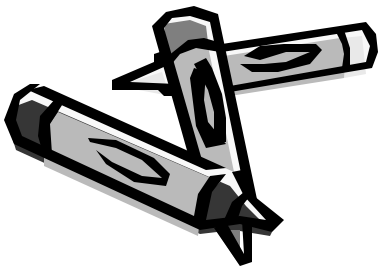
Despite the research, effective transitions remain the exception.

- Nearly half of public schools have no formal program for school visitation of incoming parents.
- Only 20% report a wide range of transition activities.

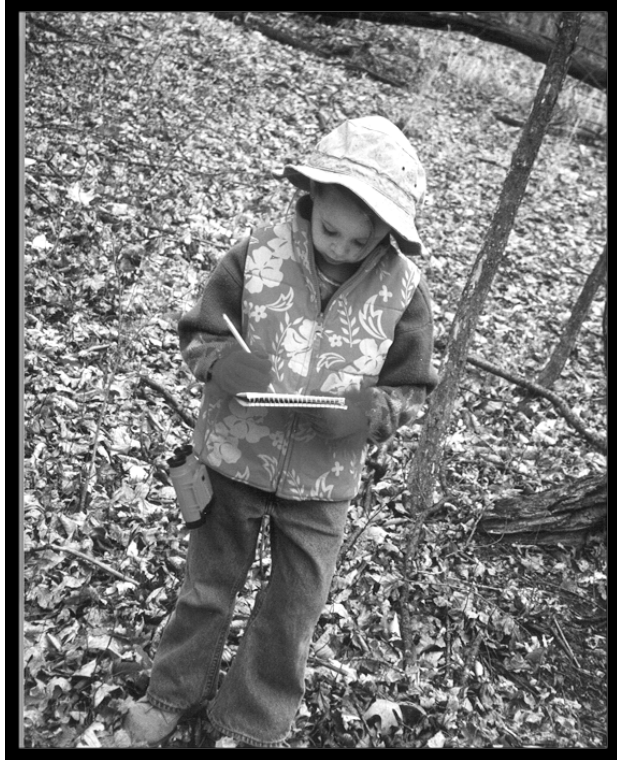


Despite the research....

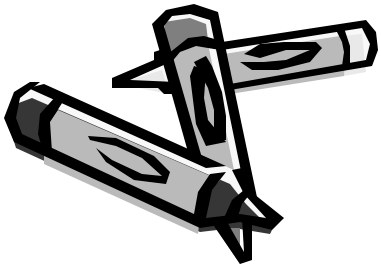
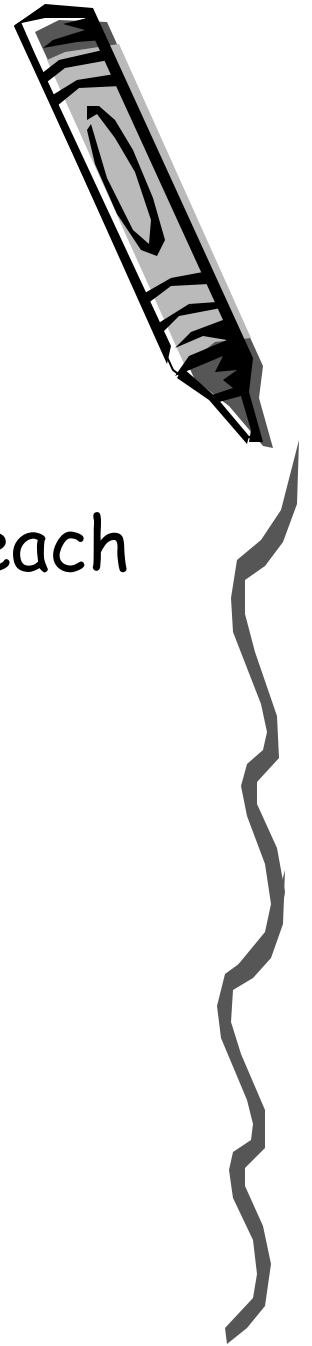
- only 10% of schools report systematic communication between kindergarten teachers and children's previous early childhood teachers.
- the vast majority of K-6 schools have no policy governing activities to strengthen continuity and ease transitions from early childhood programs.

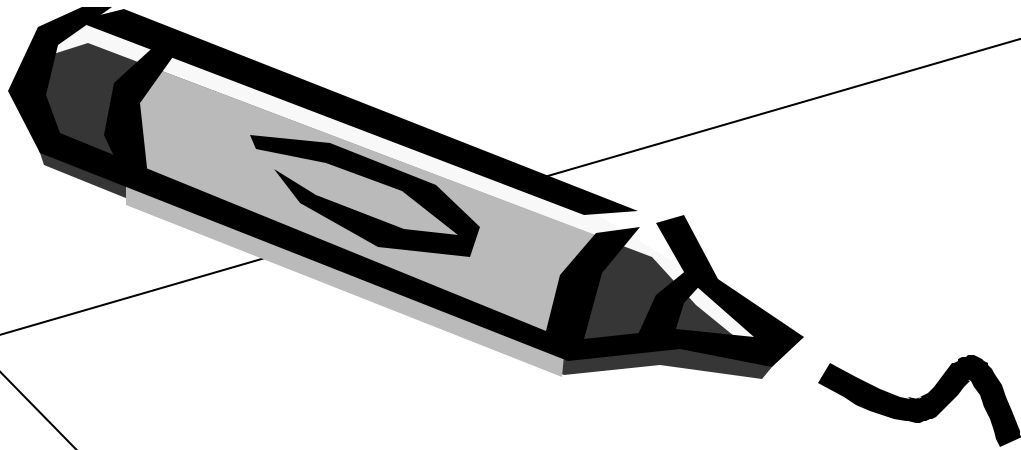


Kindergarten Transition Also

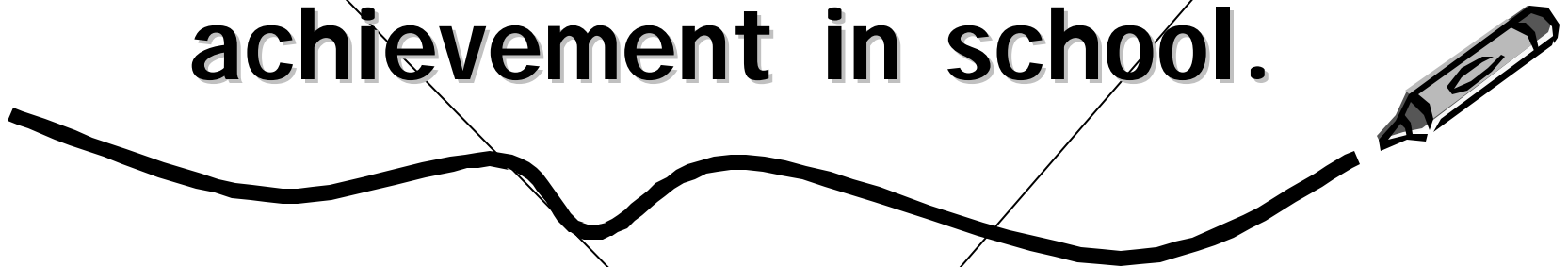


sets the stage for each
parent's future
engagement in
his/her child's
education.





**Engagement of each child's
family in education is critical
to the child's future
achievement in school.**

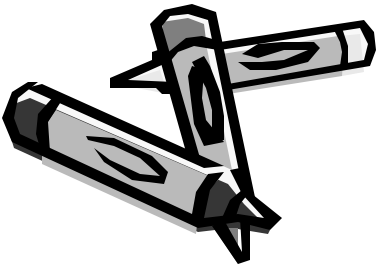


Research tells us----

when parents are involved, children achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnic/racial backgrounds or parent's education level.

children will have:

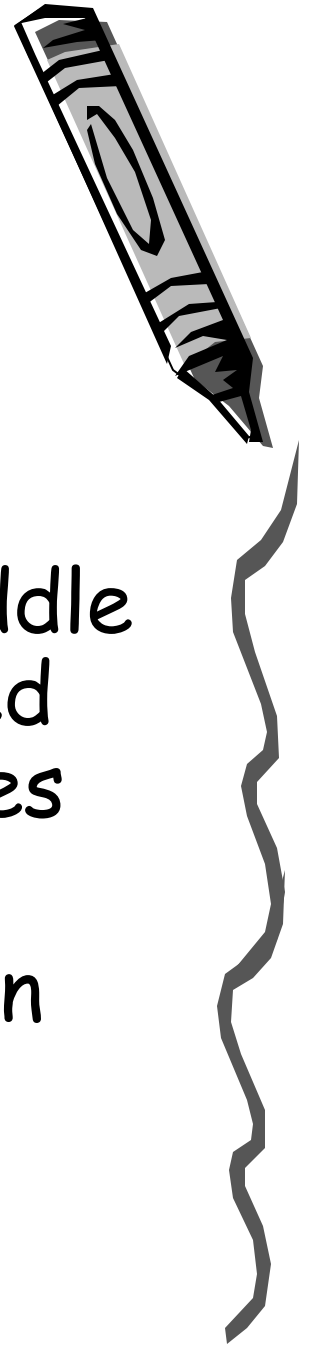
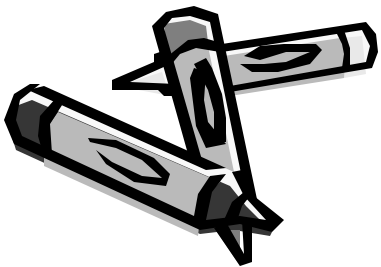
- higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates.
- better school attendance.
- increased motivation and positive attitudes.



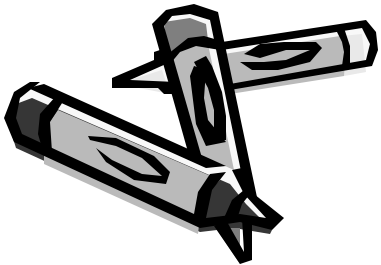
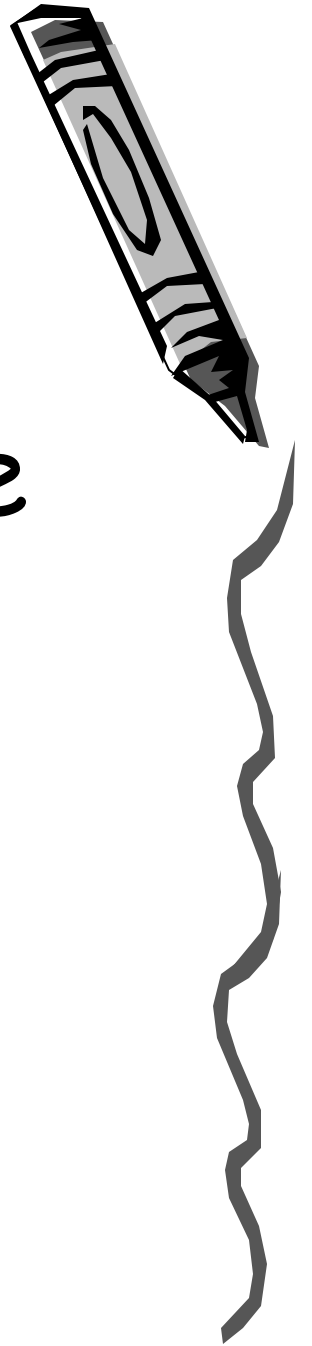
Research also tells us....

Achievement for disadvantaged children can reach the level of middle income children, when fully engaged partnerships exist between families and schools.

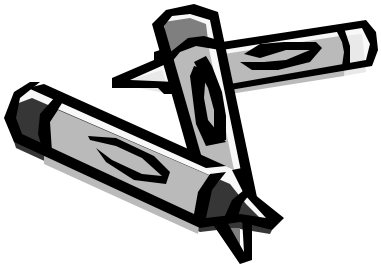
The children the farthest behind can make the greatest gains.



Given this research, why
do you think we don't have
better transitioning
between preschool
programs and
kindergarten?



Effective Strategies For Family Transitions

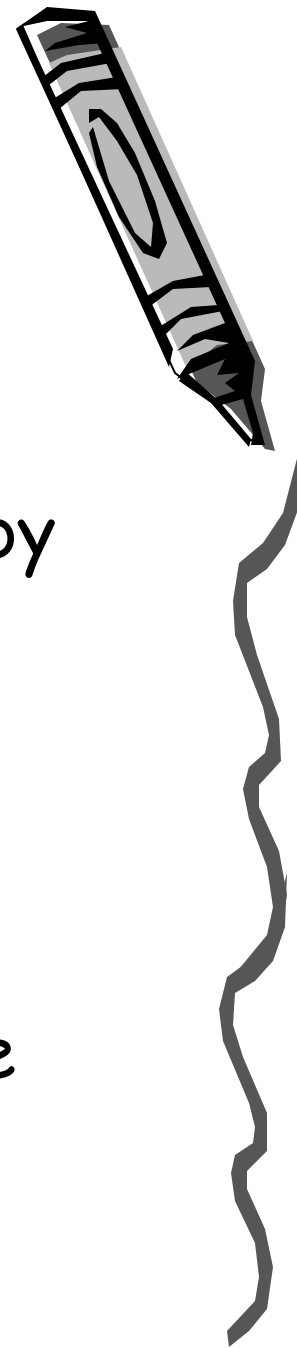


- Positive attitudes.
- Parents as decision makers.
- Welcoming and useful communication.
- Welcoming environments.



For parents to feel connected to schools, they must --

- feel respected and valued.
- be supported and viewed as important by schools, teachers, and others in the education community .
- feel they are a critical partner in their child's learning.
- have repeated contact with those messages—including at the grocery, the gas station, as well as at school.



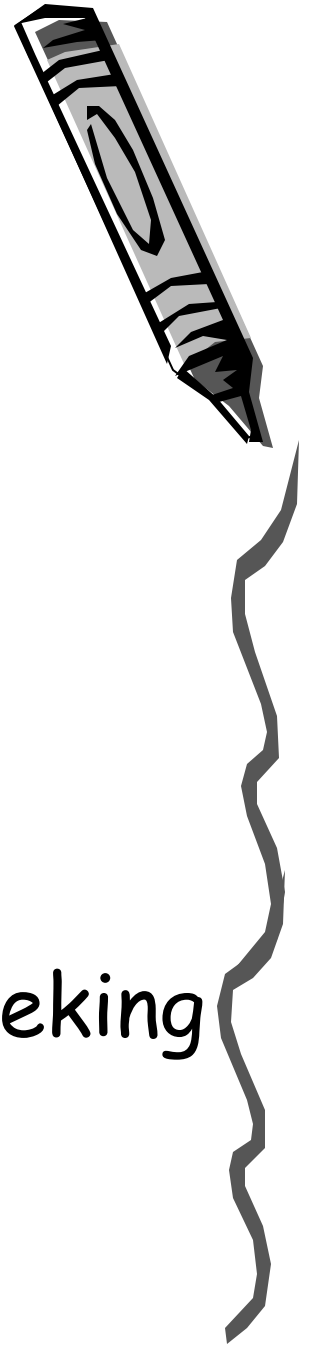
We Start With Our Attitudes and Feelings



What Do We Really Feel About..

- Engaged parents?
- Parents who aren't involved?

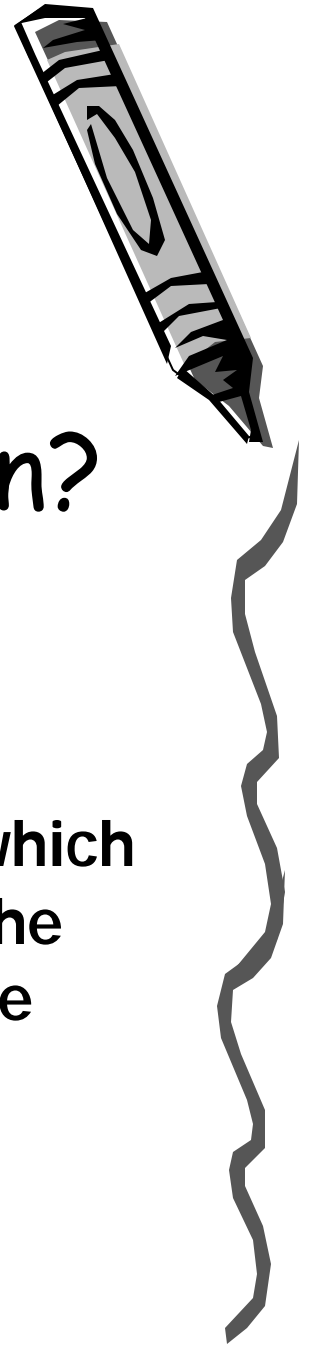
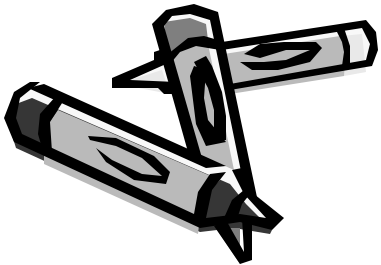
Too often we dismiss the unengaged parent as uninterested instead of seeking ways to foster their engagement.



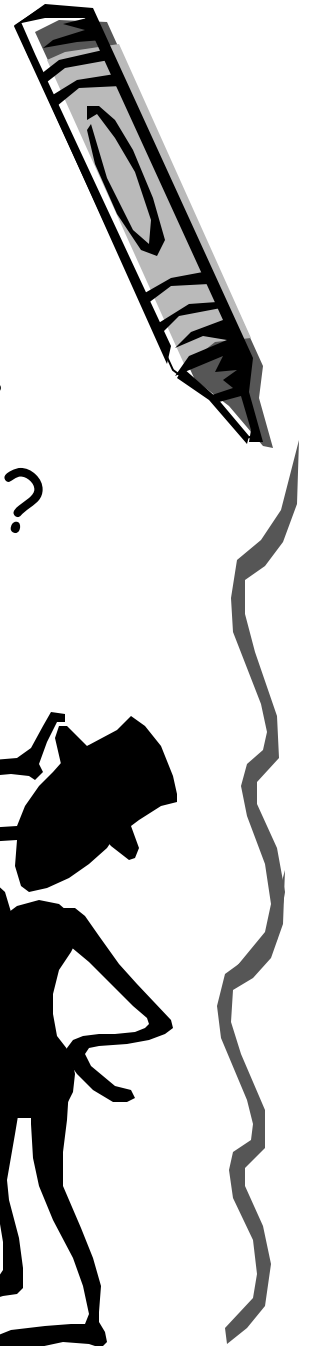
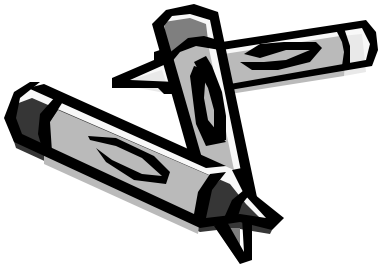
What Do We Really Feel About..

- Preschool?
- Kindergarten?

Often we have bias against one or the other which affects our willingness to work together and the messages we give to our parents regarding the other program.



How can these attitudes affect how
you approach improving your parent
transition strategies for all families?



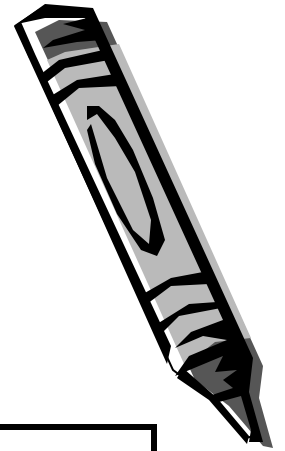
In Groups, list all of the transition strategies you have related to--

Group 1-Building bridges between the preschool and kindergarten programs.

Group 2-Parents having a role as decision makers in the transition process.

Group 3-Communicating to and from parents about the transition.

Group 4-Creating physical environments that foster a smooth transition.

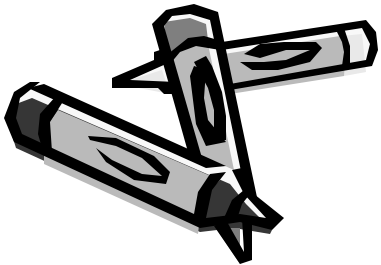
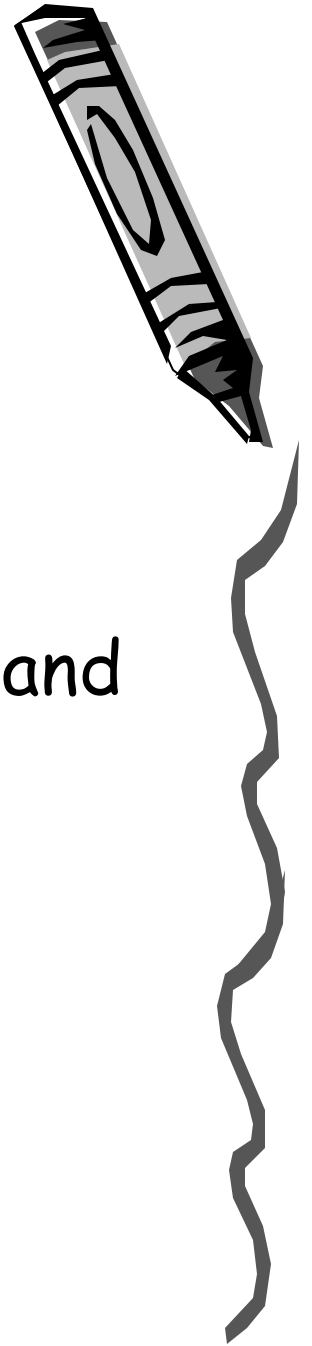


Setting the stage for successful transitioning means...

building strong bridges between preschool and
kindergarten---

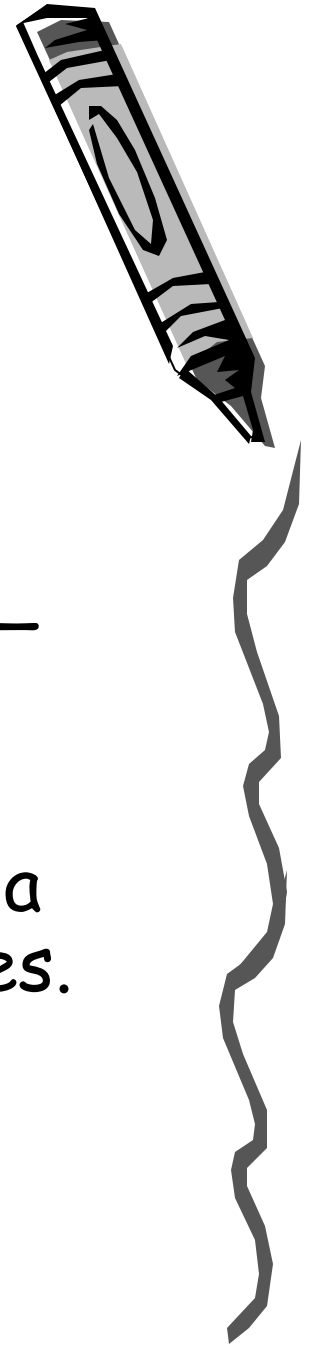
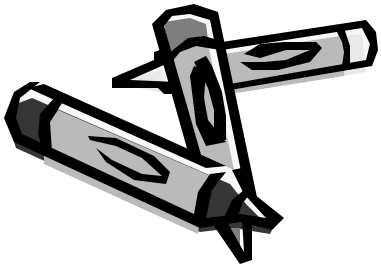
- between the organizations.
- between the people.

What did you come up with to
build strong bridges?



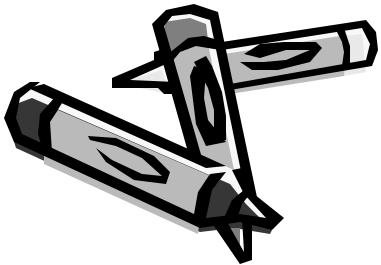
When building bridges with the other programs...

- trust and attitude are key.
- getting to know the people must occur—take the first steps and introduce yourself.
- it is easier if you can work together in a collaborative manner on other initiatives.
 - Joint training.
 - Shared resources.
 - Etc.

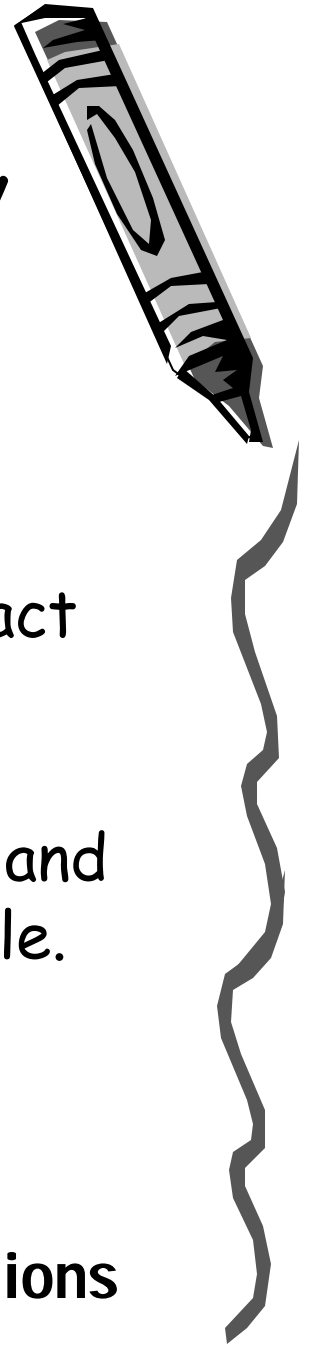


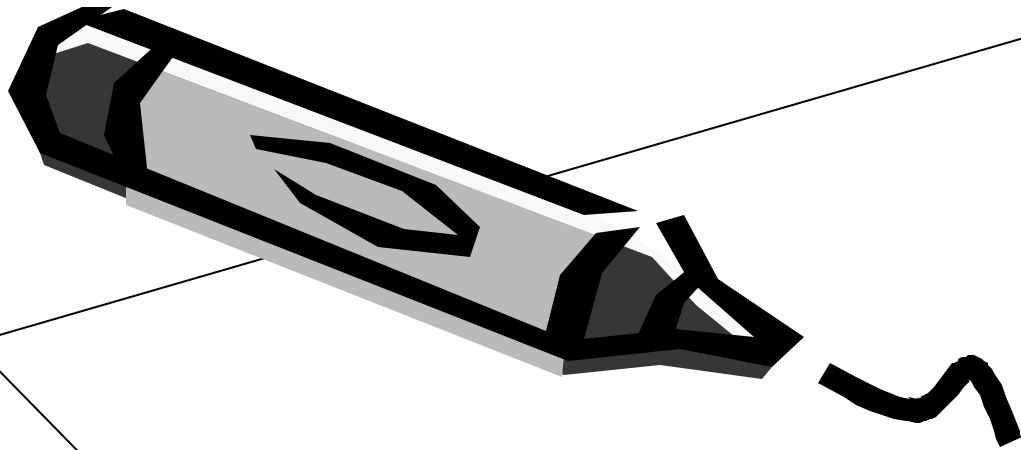
To successfully transition, parents need to:

- say goodbye to preschool.
- feel connected with important preschool people.
- understand the differences between preschool and kindergarten.
- share information about their child.
- know how to interact in the new environment.
- know who to go to and how to reach people.
- know how to seek services.

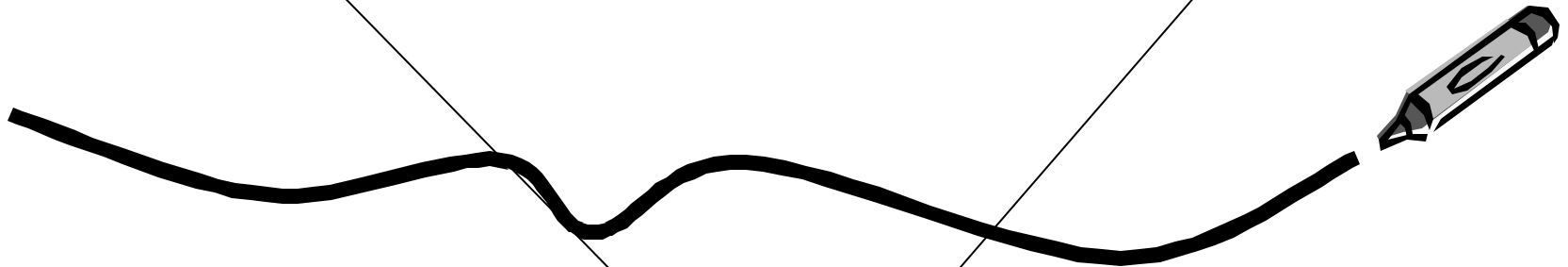


**Strong preschool/kindergarten connections
can make this happens.**



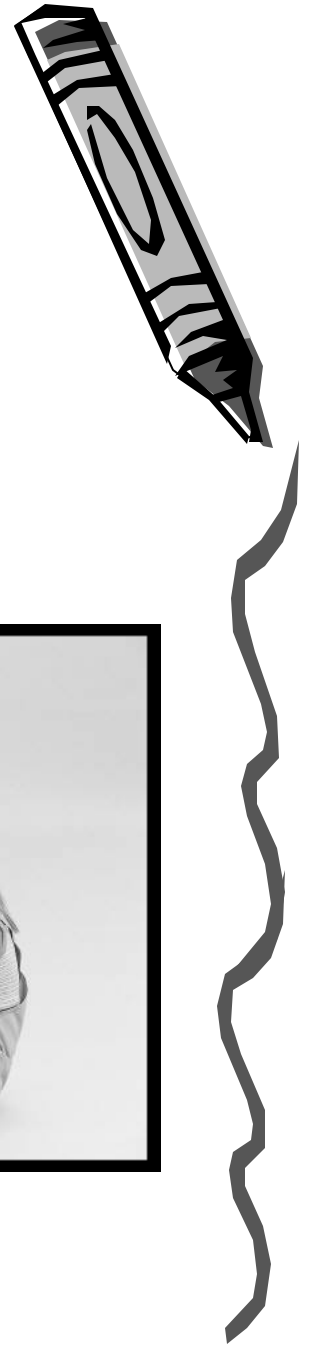
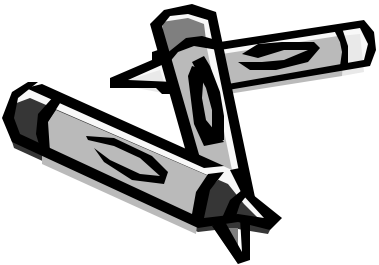


Parents As Decision Makers



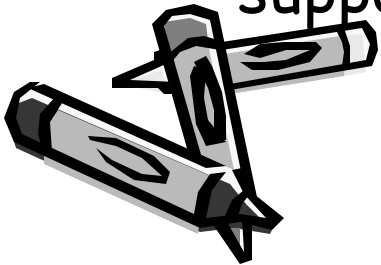
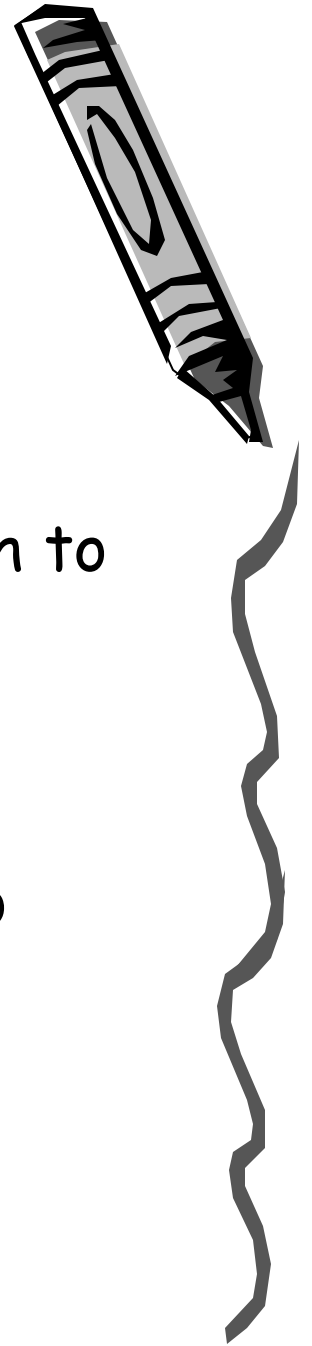
Research Tells Us

- parents need to play a role in educational decision making related to their children.
- So, what did you come up with?



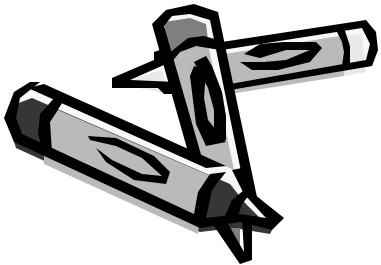
For Example, Parents as Decision Makers Can:

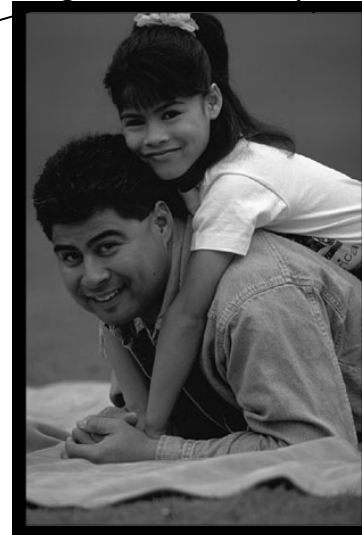
- serve on transition planning committees.
- plan ending/or welcoming celebrations.
- survey parents as to the information they wish to know about kindergarten.
- contact new schools to get information.
- assess the environment's welcoming tone.
- help arrange for speakers and trips related to kindergarten.
- set up parent mentors or parent transition support groups.



Successful Strategies Include:

- more of parent involvement in the planning for transitions, taking the leadership to engage other parents, and identifying what parents need to help them connect with the new environment.
- less of teachers and staff planning of what parents need for the transition.





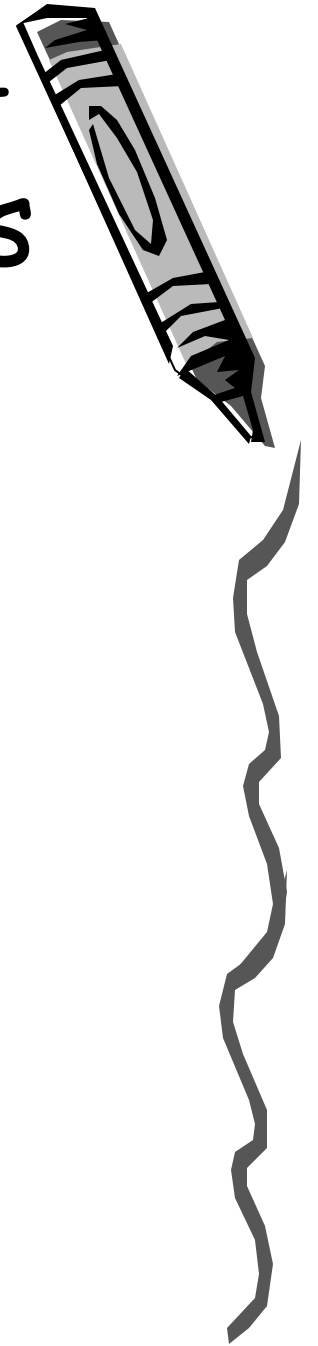
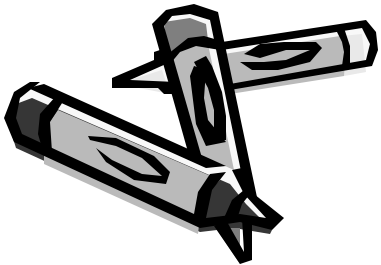
Welcoming and Useful Communication

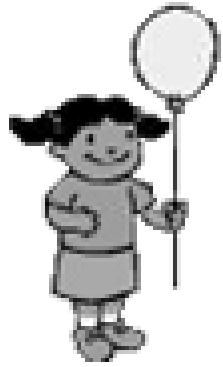


What did you suggest?

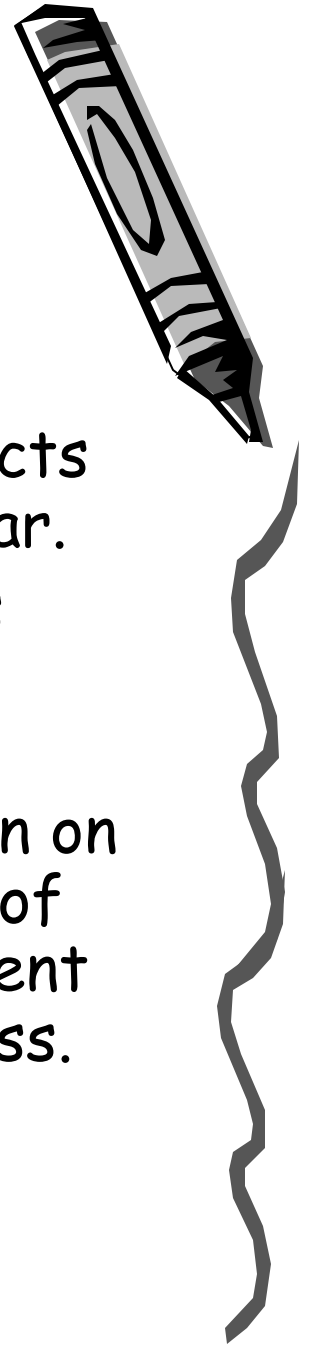
Questions to ask ourselves- How do these reach parents who....

- work two jobs or a night shift?
- can not read?
- do not read/speak English?
- have had poor experiences in the K-12 system previously?
- have not come to prior events you have offered?

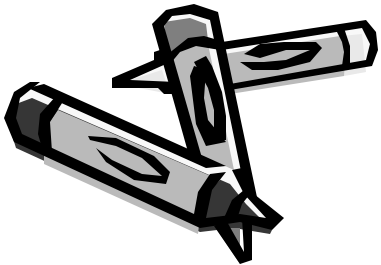




Successful Preschool Communication Strategies include:

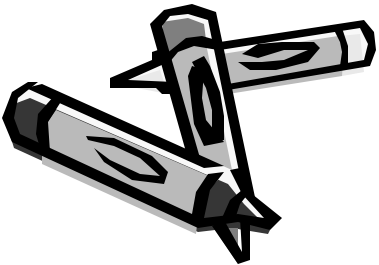


- setting up a Parent Good-bye Committee to plan an ending celebration.
- last year's parents coming back to share experiences.
- completing sheets to share information with the new teacher.
- preschool contacts for the next year.
- creation of Tips Sheets-how to volunteer, etc.
- parent education on the importance of parent involvement on future success.



Successful Kindergarten Communication Strategies

- kindergarten teachers visit preschools to meet with parents.
- setting up Parent Welcoming Committee of current kindergarten parents to survey parents, assess policy language, and written communication.
- providing parents with useful kindergarten information prior to the start of the year.
- making initial individual parent contacts in person, ex. Home Visits.
- setting up a system of parent mentors.
 - first conference for parent sharing.



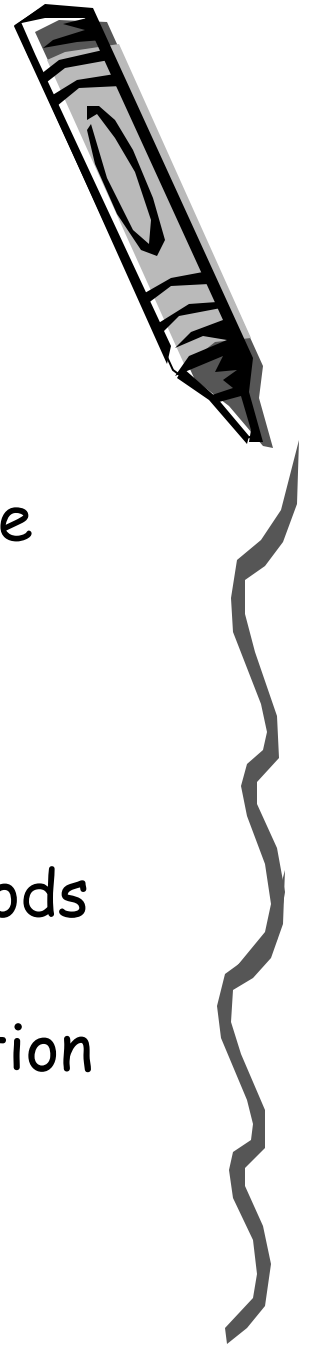
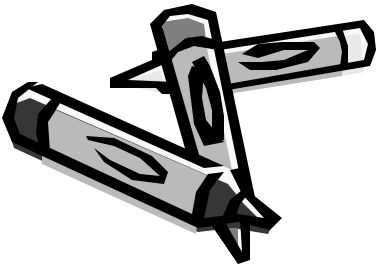
Successful communication strategies include:

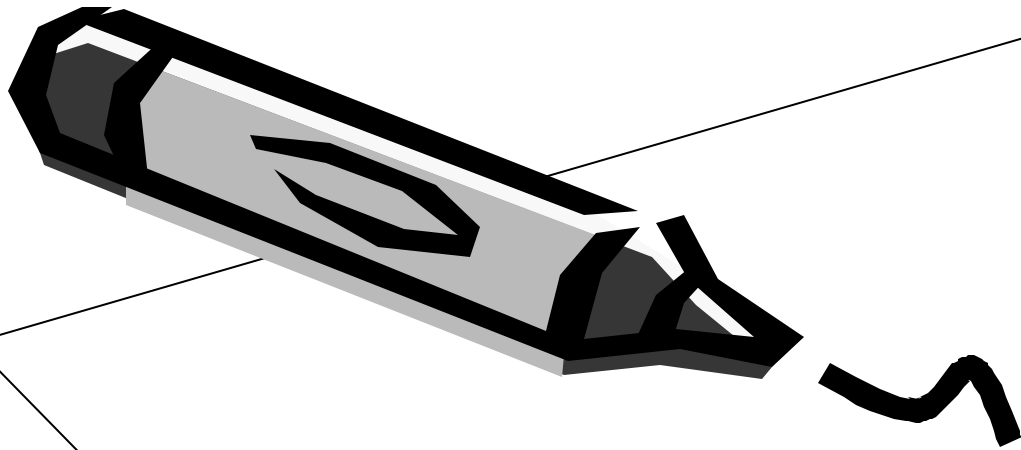
Less

- written communication.
- general communication to all parents in one language.
- communication where the teacher is the expert.

More

- informal face-to-face communication.
- Parent-to-parent communication.
- variety in communication methods to reach parents.
- Two-way communication with parents and teachers both giving information.





Welcoming Environments

What were your ideas?

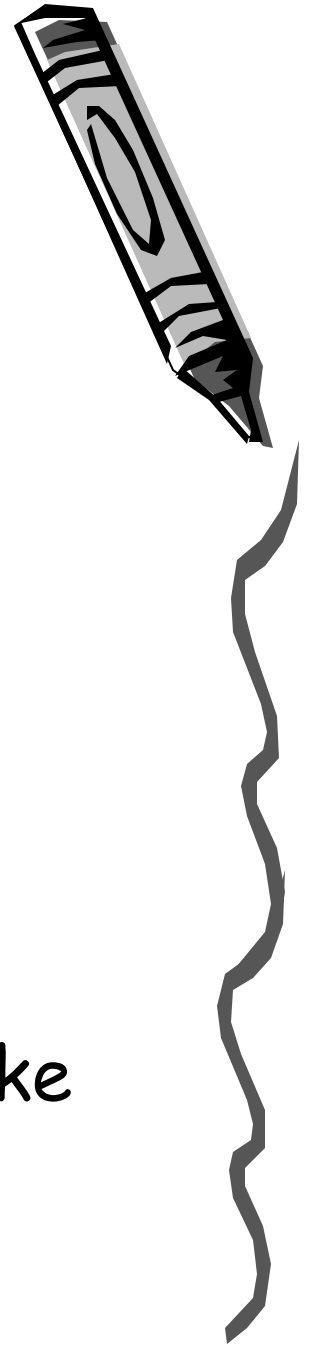
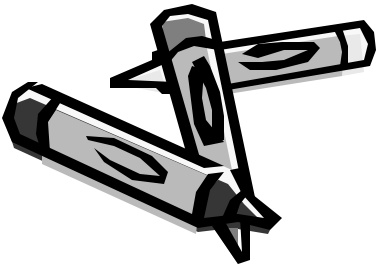


Successful Preschool Strategies Include:

setting up a Parent Committee to visually create formal memories of preschool.

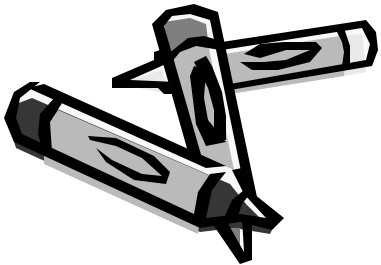
display these memories in the classroom and at home.

create a visual record of the ending celebration in the preschool environment, providing pictures to families to take with them.

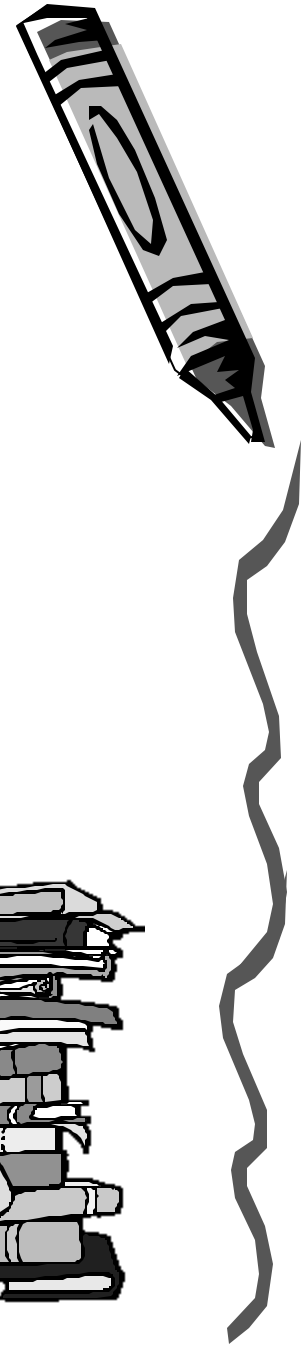


Successful Kindergarten Strategies Include:

- Parent Committee walk through to assess and make recommendations on the environment's tone for new families.
- ensure the entry and classroom is welcoming, ex. signage, appearance, security .
- holding kindergarten open houses.
- all staff greeting parents by name when they are in the building.
- introducing key contact people in the building, including bus, crossing and playground staff.
- hosting welcoming potluck dinner/ breakfast for families with school staff and some of last year's parents.

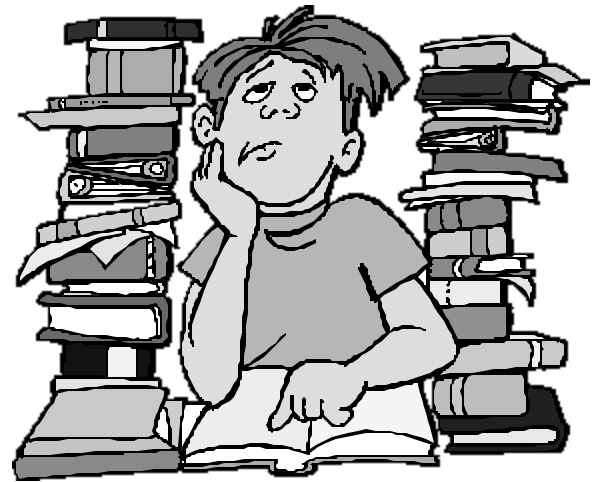
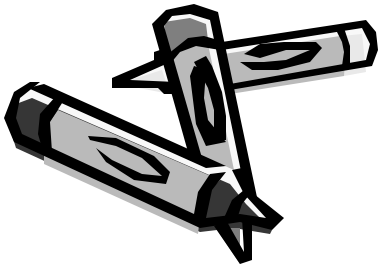


Successful transitions may or may not mean doing more than you are already doing.

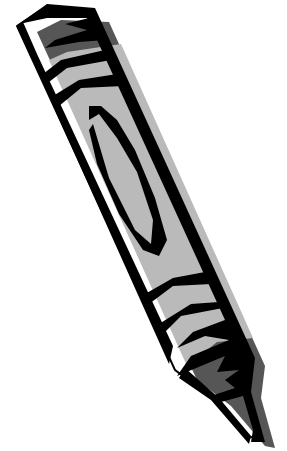


It can mean dropping ineffective approaches and adding more effective ones.

It can mean having more meaningful help from parents.

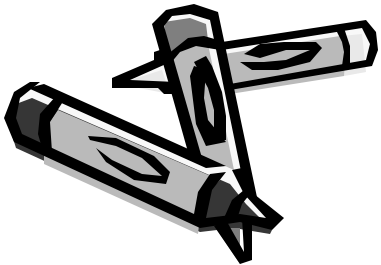


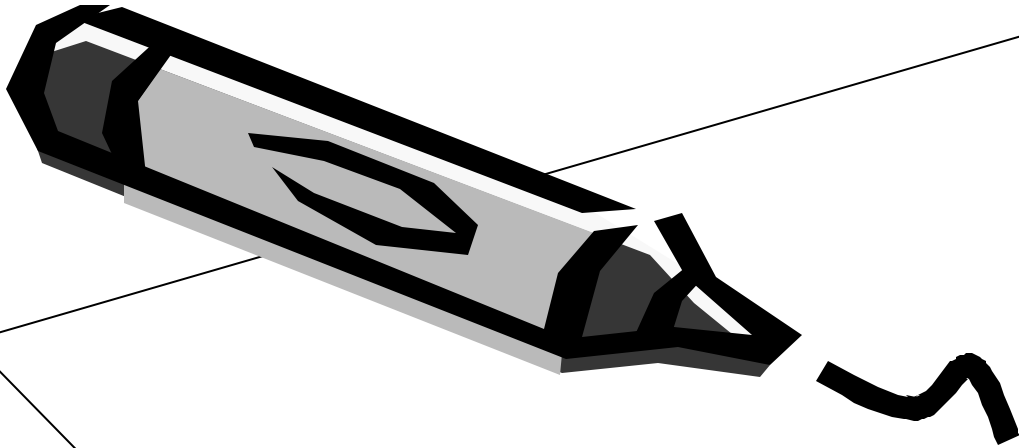
The effort is well worth it-
Children adjust more quickly.
Parents begin a pattern of involvement.



For schools, it can lead to

- improvement in teacher morale.
- higher ratings of teachers by parents.
- more support from families.
- higher student achievement.
- better community reputation.





It's not enough to be
busy..the question is:
What are we busy about?



--Henry David Thoreau